

Mayor's Column for the January 29, 2014, Edition of the Evansville Review

The Evansville Police Department was accredited by the Governing Board of the Wisconsin Law Enforcement Accreditation Group (WILEAG) on January 20, 2014. Our police department is the smallest department in Wisconsin to receive WILEAG accreditation and the first Wisconsin department accredited using the WILEAG Fourth Edition, the most up-to-date version of law enforcement best practices and procedures. I am immensely proud of our department and their outstanding achievement.

The WILEAG program is an initiative of the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association. Police departments are voluntarily assessed on use of best practices and the specific requirements of Wisconsin law in all key areas of the agency's operations and administration. There are currently 34 WILEAG law enforcement agencies (including Evansville) accredited or actively working toward accredited status.

Our successful accreditation was the culmination of three years of hard work lead by Police Chief Scott McElroy. Our department wrote or revised 83 local policies that included 235 required standards. More than 500 "proofs," examples of using each of the standards appropriately in specific instances, were provided. Sergeant Patrick Reese spearheaded the development and organization of the accreditation materials, assisted by the entire department. This process took hundreds and hundreds of hours of effort.

A "mock" practice assessment was conducted on September 11, 2013. Trained assessors suggested revisions and adjustments in preparation for the three-day on-site assessment held November 19 through 21, 2013.

The assessment team consisted of three experienced law enforcement professionals from the Whitewater, Glendale, and Burlington Police Departments. The Police Chief of Burlington headed the assessment team. The assessment included file review, interviews, tours that included the 911 Call Center and Rock County Jail in Janesville, public input and call-in sessions, and a ride-along. A detailed report of findings and recommendations was submitted to the WILEAG Governing Board.

I was honored to attend the January 24 Governing Board meeting with Chief McElroy, Sergeant Reese, and John Decker, an early member of the Evansville Police Commission (our Commission was formed as required by state law when the city population exceeded 4,000.) The Board made several positive comments. They reported that our department had a "clean" assessment. They noted the support and involvement of the entire department in the accreditation process, indicative of successful teamwork. They recognized the enthusiasm and support of the Common Council and community as our department worked towards accreditation. They pointed out that since we were the smallest department to receive accreditation, Chief McElroy should expect numerous phone calls and contacts from communities considering the accreditation process.

The accreditation period is three years. Re-accreditation involves updating policies and standards continuously to reflect the most up-to-date best practices and law changes, and providing “proofs” of compliance with the 235 standards during the three years of accreditation.

An expectation of accredited agencies is to provide an assessor. Sergeant Reese will undergo assessor training this spring. Serving on assessment teams will build interdepartmental relationships and offer opportunities to observe and compare other departments’ operations and procedures. Our city will benefit from new relationships and observations of new ideas and different processes.

In-depth peer review is unsettling. Being open to suggestions for different ways of operating requires dedication to improvement. The willingness to hear outside critiques is a testament to our police department’s commitment to providing top-notch service to our residents.

Chief McElroy, Sergeant Reese, and our police department will be recognized at the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association annual conference next month. A member of the WILEAG Governing board will also attend an upcoming Common Council meeting to make a presentation to our department. This well-deserved attention highlights a job well-done.

Community Announcements

All residential households within the city limits should have received a survey regarding the future of our community. Please complete and return the survey. Results will guide the coming update to our Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan. We have extended the deadline for completion of the survey to **February 7**. Problems with mailing affected timely delivery of the surveys to Evansville from UW-Oshkosh. UW-Oshkosh is assisting the city with conducting, compiling, and analyzing survey results.

The State Historical Marker on the CCC Veterans Memorial Bridge on East Main Street is now included on the official list of state historic markers published on the Wisconsin Historical Society website at www.wisconsinhistory.org.

Eager Free Public Library will hold the fifth Book to Movie night on Thursday, January 30, at 6:00 p.m. at Creekside Place, 102 Maple Street. Jane Austen’s 1813 classic, “Pride and Prejudice,” will be featured.

The Friends of Eager Free Public Library’s Winter Gently Used Book Sale will be held on Saturday, February 8, from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Eager Free Public Library, 39 West Main Street. The sale will be open to Friends members on Friday, February 7.

The very popular Evansville Beer School will be held on February 10 at 6:30 p.m. at Creekside Place, 102 Maple Street. Local expert Tom Calley will discuss different styles of beers, their history, characteristics, and what makes them unique. The event is open to ages 21 and older.

Community Congratulations/Thanks

Evansville thanks the sponsors of the recent Evansville Activity Fair, Evansville Community Partnership and Creekside Place, and the many organizations that participated in showcasing what Evansville offers its citizens. Opportunities for learning about our community assets are extremely valuable for building connectedness.

The Evansville community congratulates and thanks our police department for achieving accreditation and being dedicated to top-notch service. Accreditation brings distinction to our city. We are proud of your efforts!